

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 006148

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [FAID](#) [JO](#) [KICC](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN'S UPPER HOUSE APPROVES ARTICLE 98
AGREEMENT; LOWER HOUSE TO RECONSIDER IN AUTUMN

REF: A. AMMAN 05994

[B.](#) AMMAN 05918

[C.](#) AMMAN 05624

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: The Jordanian Senate unanimously endorsed the U.S.-Jordan Article 98 agreement prior to the end of parliament's extraordinary summer session on July 31. The agreement will be considered by the lower house, which previously struck it from its legislative agenda, when parliament reconvenes after Ramadan. The lower house's shelving of a new anti-corruption law (a top GOJ priority) during the extraordinary session, combined with vocal (but unproven) charges of misuse of government development funds, demonstrate the challenges the GOJ faces in achieving its objectives in an obstructionist parliament. END SUMMARY.

[¶2.](#) (C) The Jordanian Senate voted unanimously on July 31 to approve the Article 98 agreement between the U.S. and Jordan. The vote follows the July 28 recommendation of the Senate legal committee (after lobbying by key cabinet ministers) in favor of ratification (ref A). Foreign Minister Kasrawi told Charge July 31 that Senate President Zeid Rifai, acting under GOJ guidance, steered the agreement to a quick vote and helped defuse potential objections. Shortly after the Senate action, the palace issued a royal decree that immediately ended parliament's extraordinary session, which had commenced July 14.

[¶3.](#) (C) The Article 98 agreement will head back to the Chamber of Deputies (which earlier struck the agreement from its agenda) when parliament reconvenes in the fall for its next regular session, most likely in November after Ramadan. Earlier hostility toward the agreement in the lower house (ref C) may already be softening as the GOJ works to educate MPs on the agreement in light of widespread claims that its affronts Jordan's "sovereignty" (ref A). The 11-deputy Democratic Alliance bloc, for example, criticized the GOJ for "misleading the lower house" by failing to explain adequately the need for endorsing the agreement and the possible ramifications of rejecting it (i.e., the possibility that support in the U.S. for assistance to Jordan might be undermined).

[¶4.](#) (U) The final day of the extraordinary session in the lower house was marked by rancorous debate centering on funds spent on the GOJ's Socio-Economic Transformation Plan (SETP) between 2001 and 2004. Numerous MPs charged that the money (which prior to this year was not included in government budgets presented to parliament) was "spent in a suspicious way" and had not resulted in any tangible changes to Jordanian living standards. A majority of MPs present voted to form a committee representing all blocs in the Chamber of Deputies to examine SETP expenditures. PM Badran responded that his government "welcomed" the investigation and would provide documents to clarify how SETP proceeds were spent.

[¶5.](#) (C) COMMENT: While the extraordinary session agenda covered 33 legislative items, senior officials all along planned on a two week session. The King's single greatest priority was to see adoption of a new anti-corruption law (ref B). With that bill stuck in the Chamber of Deputies' legal committee (amid claims it violated the constitution), there was little reason for the GOJ to see the session continue, especially in light of continued criticism of the government as reflected in the SETP debate. END COMMENT.

HALE